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News Release

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2 plead guilty in connection with distributing marijuana

The second of two men pleaded guilty this week in federal court in connection with a Twin Cities marijuana distribution operation.

Astolfo Garcia-Gonzales, 24, Savage, pleaded guilty to one count of maintaining a drug-involved premises. Garcia-Gonzales entered his plea Aug. 20 in Minneapolis before United States District Court Judge James Rosenbaum.

Garcia-Gonzales was indicted June 9, along with Jorge Marques-Apodaca, 26, Bloomington. Marques-Apodaca pleaded guilty Aug. 6 to one count of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and to distribute marijuana.

According to their respective plea agreements, Marques-Apodaca admitted that from November 2007 to June 2008 he conspired with others to possess with intent to distribute and to distribute approximately 1,300 pounds of marijuana.

Garcia-Gonzales admitted to having assisted Marques-Apodaca in his drug-trafficking operation by providing a place to unlawfully store the marijuana in a Savage townhome he was renting.

According to a Federal Bureau of Investigation affidavit, Marques-Apodaca had been under investigation for six months, and the FBI had arranged a "controlled buy" from him on May 14, 2008. Police observed a vehicle that left Marques-Apodaca's Bloomington residence and traveled to a townhouse located on Cates Lake Drive in Savage.

The vehicle left the townhouse and returned to the Bloomington residence. Marques-Apodaca was later entering the vehicle, drove away and was observed driving to the area of 36th Avenue and Clinton Avenue S.

Police stopped the vehicle on a traffic stop, and during a search of the vehicle police found six bricks of marijuana in the trunk. Each brick weighed approximately 2 pounds. During the execution of a search warrant at the Savage townhouse, police seized approximately 200 pounds

of marijuana, according to the affidavit.

Marques-Apodaca faces a potential maximum penalty of 40 years in prison. Garcia-Gonzalez faces a potential maximum penalty of 20 years. Judge Rosenbaum will determine their sentences at a future date.

This case is the result of an investigation by the FBI and the police departments of Bloomington, Minneapolis and Savage, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney David P. Steinkamp.